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**INCORPORATING GUIDED READING
INTO A FIRST GRADE CLASSROOM**

**A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Reading Option**


**by
Julie Sell
June 1997**


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Abstract

The focus of this project addresses issues pertaining to the use of guided reading in the classroom. Current research provides a frame of reference for the analysis of guided reading as a component of a balanced literacy program (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996 and Mooney, 1995) including the implications of flexible ability grouping for elementary reading instruction, approaches to the assessment of students who participate in guided reading, and finally, classroom management for independent activities.

Guided reading has been a topic of interest for the past decade. Although there are many approaches to this component of a balanced literacy program, it is strengthened by a whole language theoretical background. If a literacy program is developed around meaningful and authentic reading, then a teacher can successfully guide a student to becoming independently literate.

In order to provide guided reading lessons for small groups, students are placed in small, flexible reading groups that are determined by their developmental reading level. The teacher provides guidance for those students by giving strong introductions of books, supporting the use of reading strategies and allowing students to make predictions and relate the books to their own experiences. During this group time, the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful, independent literacy activities. This requires good classroom management, organization and updated records of progress.

By building upon the strengths of students, teachers can incorporate the three cueing systems into instructional levels, explain important concepts about written language, and encourage children to use self monitoring techniques for effective processing. The goal of this project is to help teachers engage students in individual learning experiences that are personally meaningful, rewarding and ongoing.

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Statement of the Problem

The past two decades have served to provide America's educators with new information on literacy development, whole language, ability grouping and assessment. As these new ideas were transformed into policies, teachers were required to implement change. Armed with their newly provided materials - big books, pocket charts, and an abundant supply of quality children's literature, teachers set out to develop new literacy programs in their classrooms (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Often however, the changes were done with little or no training and support. A struggle to find a balance in their literacy program left teachers frustrated with questions about improving children's literacy levels and defenseless due to a lack of background information. Whole group cooperative activities were being encouraged, but teachers still found it difficult to develop individual students into independent readers. Diversity of reading levels in a classroom presented a multiple of challenges in many different areas. Fears about ability grouping remained an issue, assessing individual students was questioned, leveling books, and managing both time and students for small group reading lessons became a concern.

Purpel (1992) compared the plight of teachers to the dilemmas of an "army at war" (p.279). He stated that public pressure and debate seem to focus on test scores, academic achievement, study skills and computer literacy. Unfortunately, the general public knows little about what influences educators and what teachers are striving to accomplish, despite the barriers and changes of today's society. Purpel claimed that a great deal is asked of teachers and warns that "there is danger in both bashing and romanticizing teachers-indeed we will not do them, or ourselves, honor by denying them and us our humanity" (p. 278).

Unlike our public society which seems to focus on the general group norms, teachers are concerned about the reading ability of individual students. More current

research is showing results that link literacy development to personal experience.

"Ultimately, readers discover the principles of literacy and make them their own" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.xvii). Since children arrive at school with anywhere from zero to two thousand hours of literacy experiences (California Department of Education, 1995), this presents an even greater diversity of reading abilities. It has been noted that low reading ability is partially attributed "to the low socioeconomic level, large differences, transiency, attendance and parental involvement" (Strech, 1994, p. 3). These obstacles present other challenges to our ability as educators to design programs that educate students, regardless of their background.

There have been many debates about the teaching practices pertaining to literacy and literacy development. The question of how to reach all of their students is a concern among committed educators. "Some educators believe the problem is an emphasis on phonics versus no phonics, basal readers versus literature-based instruction, homogeneous grouping versus heterogeneous grouping,...and direct (explicit) instruction versus discovery" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.x). As the debate continues over these issues, teachers search to find ways to take a child from where they are in reading, to where they need to go, and assess their progress (Fountas & Pinnell).

Moving children from emergent level readers to strategic, independent readers, requires skillful teachers who understand patterns of literacy development, rely on a strong theoretical belief system based on meaning centered literacy learning, manage classrooms efficiently, offer feedback and encouragement, and provide an environment rich in appropriate level materials.

Being a third year teacher, by no means prepares me to give an expert opinion of how to do all these things. Nor do I claim to have a tight grasp on the patterns of literacy development. I do believe, however, that a meaning centered theoretical position is of

great importance when developing a balanced literacy program in my classroom, "balanced," meaning practices that reflect a whole language theory of teaching that allow language learning to be whole, functional and relevant. In order to make reading relevant, teachers can focus on helping beginners to use their own knowledge and experiences, while constructing meaning from the written word, without neglecting skill based instruction that is taught in context. Whole language advocates do not think about "*teaching reading* (dispensing reading curriculum to students) but about *guiding and supporting students in developing as independent readers, writers, and learners*" (Weaver, 1994, p. 59).

Normal reading seems to begin, proceed, and end in meaning, and the source of meaningfulness must be the prior knowledge in the reader's head. Nothing is comprehended if it does not reflect or elaborate on what the reader already knows (Smith as quoted in Weaver, 1994, p. 15)

Teachers who embrace a whole language theory do not believe that reading is simply a decoding process, nor the mastery of isolated skills, but "an active process by which we predict, sample, and confirm or correct our hypothesis about the written text" (Weaver, 1990, xvii).

Activities that promote balanced literacy as defined by Rigby (1989), Fountas and Pinnell (1996), Weaver (1994), and Batzle (1994 as cited in Strech, 1995) include reading literature aloud to students on a daily basis, experiencing shared reading as a whole class by using big books, using predictable stories and poems, guided reading instruction with small groups using appropriate leveled materials, and providing opportunity and encouragement for independent reading. This reflects Smith's (1997) assertion that "children who read a lot tend to be very good readers. It's not that they need to be good

readers in order to be able to read a lot, but the act of reading brings about the mastery required" (p.116).

As a new teacher, my goals are to facilitate learning, to encourage children to use their background knowledge and experiences, and to share them with each other cooperatively. I want to bring children and books together in exciting ways. As a first year teacher, I was saved by the curriculum guide. Ideas that I used either came from another experienced teacher, or straight from the published curriculum. I did not have time to decide whether the ideas worked or not, or even if they met my goals. As time moved on with a pursuit of a Masters Degree in Reading, and as experience became a more reliable source, I began to reflect on my practices and belief system and the theories behind the acquisition of reading. This brought me to question my own definition of what reading is and helped me to build my program from there.

Having a definition about the acquisition of reading is one of the first steps in preparing to build an effective reading program. Those who see reading as a process of constructing meaning and making sense of print, can find a place to begin their journey towards helping children achieve this goal via authors like Smith (1997) who states, "*children can't be taught to read. A teacher's responsibility is not to teach children to read, but to make it possible for them to learn to read*" (p.5). By introducing the basic tools that enable children to formulate basic reading skills, and by fostering the development of strategies and a visual processing system, teachers can nurture literacy development. Teachers can also expect personal experiences to influence a child's development, anticipate mistakes being made along the way, and encourage a risk-taking environment. By setting up the learning environment in this way, teachers empower students to tap into their own sources of knowledge to help them create their own meanings from print. One of the essential aspects of a balanced literacy program that

enables teachers to do this in a classroom full of diverse students, is the inclusion of guided reading as one of the components of instruction.

Guided reading is the component I have been interested in developing for my classroom. Although there is not an overwhelming amount of literature on this topic, Margaret Mooney (1995), Gay Sue Pinnell and Irene Fountas (1996) have developed their theories into practices that incorporate this component, and provide information to help teachers teach strategies through guided reading techniques. "The use of strategies implies awareness, reflection, and interaction between the reader and the author" (Vogt, 1997, p.3). A skillful, strategic reader is able to utilize prior knowledge, make predictions, confirm or disconfirm predictions, turn words into meaning, self-check and monitor for meaning, readjust words by using context clues, evaluate texts, and summarize stories (Vogt, 1997).

In the past, I assumed that guided reading was implemented for a large group of students reading together with the same text. Through research, I realized a reform was needed in my approaches to guided reading. My misconceptions had led me to the frustration of teaching to "the norm," and not meeting the needs of individual learners. According to the definitions of guided reading by Mooney (1995, p.54) and Fountas and Pinnell (1996, p.2), I was not matching a child to the text in order to provide a challenge in which the student could experience successful problem solving and new learning.

This reform, however, lead to inquiry into other aspects that relate to guided reading. Along with this component in a balanced literacy program, comes the issues of ability grouping, classroom management and assessment. Without understanding, organization and control of these concepts it will be difficult to create opportunities that allow students to work closely with the teacher who can monitor individual student's use of strategies and help them to read for meaning.

In this project, I propose to address the issues that are related to the implementation of guided reading and provide other primary teachers with ideas for classroom management, materials for assessment, and guidelines for creating a leveled text gradient for matching books to the individual learner.

A new teacher's classroom has much room for inquiry and reform. My program, once influenced by curriculum guidelines and school standards, has been developed into a whole new way of promoting early literacy. A flexible framework is what I aim to achieve in hopes of providing meaning and success in reading for all students in my classroom. A well balanced literacy program is a priority, and guided reading "...is the heart of a balanced literacy program" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.1).

Review of Literature

Literature supports that instigating change can be difficult, especially in a culture where instruction has been dominated by publishers and test producers. This accountability to publishers and standardized tests, is difficult to compete with when employing a whole language philosophy. However, in areas of reading instruction, teachers are given a choice for instructional decisions. In order to foster the development of a whole language philosophy in the classroom, it is important to realize that it is not just imposing a set of practices or methods that are specified in one particular way. Diversity and risk taking are encouraged. A key component to a good program is knowledgeable teachers that nurture good reading strategies in students "despite the approach of the reading materials provided by the schools" (Weaver, 1994, p.4) or the curriculum standards.

Due to the divergent functions of guided reading, it is important to step back and recognize that there are many approaches to teaching reading. In Strech's article (1995, p.11), two definitions of reading are quoted. The first one by Perfetti (1994, p.494), defines reading as "...the ability to map print to language, decoding..." The second one by Mooney (1990), provides a sharp contrast:

Reading is the sharing of meaning. It is the interaction of the giver and the receiver. Reading is the creation and recreation of meaning; and it takes place through the nonverbal as well as verbal modes of language- through listening and speaking, reading and writing, moving and watching, shaping and viewing.

Reading is not merely a curriculum subject able to be confined to any one period, for reading is part of any exchange of meaning through text. (pp. 2-3)

Both of these definitions could be placed at opposite ends of the "skills versus process" continuum of definitions of reading. However, in the development of a balanced reading program, the basis for the inclusion of a model of reading that attends to semantics, syntax and phonics is advised. Advocates of a natural, holistic approach to beginning reading are not in agreement about how this can be accomplished. Thus, it is important for educators to choose whatever methods of teaching suit their style and needs.

Balanced literacy learning is developed around meaningful reading. Mooney's (1990) definition of reading cited above (As quoted in Strech, 1995, p.11) will be used as the basis of this paper. Students who are successful readers utilize three language cueing systems to construct meaning: the semantic, or meaning system; the syntactic, or language system; and the grapho-phonemic, or system of relationship between letters and sounds (Fisher, 1995). A teacher's goal is to help students gain flexibility in the use of a variety of cues as they become independent readers. The development of the strategic and integrated use of the three cueing systems are enhanced in a balanced literacy program that fosters "...a wide range of reading and writing experiences, including reading to children, reading with children, and reading by children" (Rigby, 1989, p. 3).

Actual components of the program according to Batzle (1994, p.17- as cited in Strech, 1994, p. 14) include: "Reading Aloud (reading *to* children), Shared Reading (reading *with* children), Guided Reading (reading *by* children), Responses, Shared Writing, Modeled Writing, Language Experience, and Children's Writing."

Components of a balanced literacy approach provide a continuum of learning for emergent, early, fluent and independent readers, and encourage children to take responsibility for their own choice of selections. A balanced literacy approach that is influenced by a whole language philosophy includes rich resources for reading, writing, talking, listening, observing, and thinking throughout the curriculum. It encompasses a

variety of genre, authors, illustrators, book designs, using supportive and challenging text. It ensures good reading and writing models facilitated by the teacher, incorporates lessons for collaborative learning, and offers many opportunities for learning skills in authentic context (Literacy 2000, 1995).

Issues related to utilizing guided reading in the balanced literacy approach include the definition and techniques found in guided reading, the potential conflicts manifested by ability grouping, the assessment of literacy, and classroom management within this program.

Definition

One of the interesting things discovered in the search for a definition of "guided reading", was the diversity of answers and perceptions. There is not one exact, agreed upon definition of guided reading, nor is there one standard set of rules to follow within each definition. There are parallels however, and each definition provides similar components of guided reading that can be adapted to one's personal theory.

Guided Reading is a context in which a teacher supports each reader's development of effective strategies for processing novel texts at increasingly challenging levels of difficulty. The teacher works with a small group of children who use similar reading processes and are able to read similar levels of text with support. (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.2)

I believe Guided reading is when you and a small group of children, or when you and a child, talk, think and read through a text which offers manageable challenges for each reader. Your role is one of support, ensuring that the children read with comprehension... Material for guided reading should merit the readers' time and attention, and match their developmental stage. (Mooney, 1995, p. 54)

Guided reading is a technique with specific diagnostic, instructional and evaluative intent. It supports and encourages the development of strategies for independence in reading within a small cluster or group. Each child is in the role of reader with his or her own copy of the book. The teacher acts as a facilitator to set the scene and, through skillful questioning, engages the children in a discussion that enables them to unfold the story and confidently read the text themselves. (Literacy 2000, 1995)

Guided reading is the heart of the instructional reading program. In guided reading, the teacher provides short-term help for 15-20 minutes a day to small groups based on ability for the purpose of developing specific strategies and reading independence. A teacher models good questioning techniques and shows students what questions to ask themselves as readers and how to make informed choices as they respond to a text. (First Grade Curriculum Guide-Corona Unified School District)

Children who have reached similar stages of reading development work closely with the teacher in small groups of no more than eight. Each child is in the role of a reader, with his or her own copy of the selected book. The book will have been carefully chosen to be supportive, predictable, and closely matched to children's abilities, needs, and interests. (Rigby, 1989, pp.4-5)

...The steps I use in a guided reading lesson include, but are not limited to: 1) discussion of illustrations and making predictions about events; 2) introducing key vocabulary words; 3) reading the selection to the students as they follow along; 4) asking comprehension questions as the reading progresses.... (Gayle Chew-Second Grade Teacher)

These various descriptions provide several commonalities among the different definitions of guided reading. Although no two answers were alike when a group of seven first and second grade elementary teachers were given a questionnaire that asked them to define the term "guided reading", most reflected reading in small groups with the guidance of the teacher. The definitions given above, all suggest that guided reading be done in small groups working closely with the teacher. Mooney, Rigby, Fountas & Pinnell, all

support matching the text to the child according to the appropriate developmental reading level. It is assumed that this recommendation signifies homogeneous grouping among students with similar abilities. It is possible that a direct reference to ability grouping is omitted because it has been traditionally known as a controversial subject (Slavin, 1987a).

Techniques

In guided reading, the teacher works directly with the small group of students providing opportunities and questions to develop strategies for utilizing syntactic, semantic, and grapho-phonetic information at various developmental stages. Language experience activities, and vocabulary and comprehension development, are also sometimes addressed during this twenty minute time frame. According to Mooney (1995), Fountas & Pinnell (1996), it is best to provide each child with a personal copy of the same book to read independently either orally or silently, depending on the developmental level. The teacher facilitates successful reading through skillful questioning and encourages readers to develop their own sense of meaning (Mooney, 1995). In order to develop independent problem solving, background knowledge prior to reading is addressed (semantics), strategies for predicting and confirming text (syntax and grapho-phonics) are introduced, and a meaningful purpose is established. According to Mooney (1995):

In the early stages, your questions, prompts and comments set in place the sequence of predicting, sampling, confirming and where necessary, self-correcting. You can help the children establish the habit of not only working for meaning, but of checking and reflecting as they read (p.58).

As the teacher listens in on a student's independent reading, they can work with them individually to prompt and assist them as necessary to allow for problem solving using a variety of strategies and cue sources.

Literacy 2000 (1995) provides a helpful guided reading sequence for emergent and early readers:

Suggested Guided Reading Teaching Sequence For Emergent and Early Readers

Select An Appropriate Text

- * Will the children have a high level of success and be sufficiently challenged?
- * Is the text interesting and appealing?
- * Do features of the text provide needed practice?

Set The Scene

- * Initiate discussion that arouses the children's interest and encourages them to draw on their personal experience.
- * Talk about the book cover using the illustration to encourage predictions.
- * Read the title, author and illustrator.

Read The Text

- * Reread the title on the title page and talk about the illustration. Help children focus on any details that help them make any further predictions.
- * "Talk" children through the book, page-by-page, using what they see and know about illustrations to sample and predict the story. If there is time, write down predictions.
- * Highlight vocabulary through discussion. Use questions and prompts to check for grapho-phonemic match, and semantic and syntactic sense.
- * Have them read samplings of the text to confirm their predictions. Focus attention on details that help children learn to cope with challenges they meet while reading: Using pictures, reading on and going back, sounding out, etc.
- * After the children have been guided to the author's message, they read the book as a group or independently within the

group while the teacher observes and supports as necessary.

Return To The Text

- * Discuss the story with the children. Relate it to other stories the children know. Ask "what if...", or "why do you think..." questions.
- * Invite individual comments and opinions.
- * Have children reread the story in pairs or individually within the group.
- * Take advantage of the possibilities for teaching reading skills and strategies in the context of the story.

Responding To The Text

- * Listen to the spontaneous responses children make.
- * Reread all, or favorite, parts of the book once more. Rereading deepens and extends the children's understanding.
- * If time allows, demonstrate and facilitate creative responses that enrich and compliment reading, such as writing, dramatization, arts and crafts. Encourage children to suggest their own responses. (pp. 19A-19B)

At the end of the guided reading group session, the books are collected by the teacher while the other group that is called up, temporarily leaves their center activity. Different level books for the new group are distributed and a similar procedure is used with variation to the developmental levels.

Regardless as to what definitions or strategies are used in order to develop guided reading, it is important for teachers to construct their own belief system about a reading theory and to personalize their teaching methods. Instruction is learning to create your own ideas, share them with others and adapt other's viewpoints into one's personal style. Guided reading can be a personal experience for both the children and the teacher. It not only allows teachers to facilitate learning, it enables them to assess students according to their own stage of development and work within their own "zone of proximal development" (Fisher, 1995, p.111).

Ability Grouping

According to Strech (1994), management is a central issue in a balanced literacy classroom. Ability grouping is usually used to organize and manage instruction effectively in order to meet the needs of individual learners. Educators have used various organizational methods to improve the quality of reading instruction. Most often, students are grouped heterogeneously in self contained classroom, then divided into homogeneous ability groups for specific reading instruction (Ekwall & Shanker, 1989).

Although a balanced literacy program includes a form of ability grouping in the guided reading component, Kenneth Goodman claims that ability grouping is not an activity supported explicitly by whole language advocates (Strech, 1995).

Researchers have suggested that instruction move away from ability grouping. Opponents have stressed that ability grouping is "unfair to low achievers, cites problems of poor peer models, lowers teacher's expectations and slows down instructional pace in the classroom" (Slavin, 1983, p.112). Heibert (1983) claims that a child who is put into a low-ability group in the beginning of their learning development has little chance of ever moving up. Eventually, their self-esteem and desire to learn is damaged. Research against grouping indicated that students placed in the lower-ability groups spent more time on skill related activities and less on reading time and comprehension (Allington, 1983).

In addition to the controversies of ability grouping, other difficulties that may exist while trying to implement guided reading are: difficulties managing multiple groups within the classroom, developing effective unsupervised work that engages other students in active learning while the teacher works in groups, and extra preparation of work for the teacher. Moreover, teachers may get caught up in ability grouping, but forget to do ability teaching (Bailey & Bridges, 1983).

In spite of these many problems, some elementary teachers proclaim that flexible ability grouping is essential for guided reading instruction. One important argument in favor of flexible grouping is the assumption that the potential of a low achieving child is not necessarily less than a child who is at a higher ability. If flexible ability grouping is done for the right reasons, it respects the individual learner, rather than teaches to the norm of the whole class.

Organizing a class for literacy learning in a whole group setting, assumes that all students will learn, understand, respond and be able to move on to the next level at the same time. The results of this are boredom for some, and failure for others. It could be argued that reading is suitable for flexible ability grouping due to the fact that it is perceived as developmental. Flexible grouping enables the teacher to recognize the individual needs and promote individual learning. It also provides examples of the real world by addressing the fact that everyone has something different to offer to their learning (Bailey & Bridges, 1983).

Slavin (1987), also presents research that indicates positive effects on achievement through grouping based on certain circumstances. He proposes that there are two important advantages of regrouping for selected subjects such as reading and/or math. First, students remain in a heterogeneous setting for most of the day, so they are less likely to experience a lower-status labeling effect. Second, students are grouped solely on the basis of their level of development of reading. His research indicates that regrouping plans can be instructionally effective if three conditions are fulfilled: Instructional level and pace must be completely adapted to student performance level, plans need to be flexible so that changing students from one group to another is possible, and the regrouping must be done for only one or two subjects so that students stay in heterogeneous grouping for most of the day.

Margaret Mooney (1990), claims that guided reading groups within a balanced literacy program are not comparable to traditionally grouped reading instruction. She states, "Guided reading is not a new name for instructional reading or any other form of group teaching or work with a basal. There are major differences in the intent and techniques between guided reading and the more traditional 'teaching' methods" (As cited in Strech, p. 35).

Proponents of ability grouping argue that: "1) teachers can better meet students' individual differences when the range of abilities is narrower because they can provide more individual attention and more easily gear materials to the proper level; and 2) students feel less failure and more challenge if grouped with peers of similar ability" (Ekwall & Shanker, 1989).

Fountas & Pinnell (1996) suggest a dynamic form of grouping. By using appropriate-level texts, children of both low and high ability, read many books that support their development and build on their experiences. Even for students in low level reading groups who read easier books, reading time is accelerated, not merely limited to decoding practice and parts of stories. Thus, comprehension and vocabulary are still increased. Dynamic grouping allows for flexibility and is a continual developing process. "The goal for the children is not so much to move up levels, but to assure their enjoyment, expand their experiences and understanding of books, and increase their strengths as readers with a great variety of texts" (p.103). Evaluation is based on observation and continual use of running records, so changes are always expected.

Whether or not a teacher chooses to use ability grouping as a component of guided reading, it is important to keep in mind that each child's development is unique, and to recognize the differences in the ability to listen, concentrate and understand, even within a designated ability group. Each student brings a variety of personal experiences and

perceptions that contribute to their learning. Working in small groups with 5-6 children that read at a similar development stage and share common understandings, cannot be replicated in a whole class situation (Mooney, 1995). Not only can dynamic grouping enable children to work at appropriate levels of development, teachers can assess them at a closer level allowing more information to be gathered and utilized for further instruction.

Assessment

Traditional literacy assessment has been influenced by a mechanistic paradigm. Scientific methods greatly influenced this system and led educators to believe that all students learned in the same mechanistic way, some were just farther ahead than others. The nature of assessment attempted to objectify knowledge through right-wrong answers. Scores and statistics taken from standardized tests attempted to indicate children's reading abilities and diagnose problem areas. In the past, this type of assessment was aligned with the methods of teaching. Reading was understood to be a sequence of skills and processes that were predictable. Components of the reading process were taught as isolated skills that eventually were supposed to lead to literacy. Learning was teacher controlled and treated the same for each student. Parents, politicians and administrators had a large interest in standardized tests, and wanted to see a direct correlation of scores to the methods of instruction.

By the 1970's, testing of primary children approached unprecedented levels. Testing children through standardized measures was vigorously debated among educators. Not only were tests being used to promote, retain and place students, teachers began to question the validity and the effects of the tests on students. Support for more authentic forms of assessment based on observation and documentation, became more commonly

aligned with holistic views of language development (Perrone, 1991). In 1976, "The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI), issued a position paper calling for a moratorium on standardized testing in the early years of schooling" (p.132).

Although there is question about the adequate measurement of intelligence by standardized tests throughout all grades, it is especially questionable for children in the early primary grades. It is during these early years when intellectual growth is most uneven and unpredictable. The assumption that a standardized test can classify students into a certain ability group defies almost everything that we have come to understand about their developmental stages (Perrone, 1991). Unfortunately, "teachers respond to the pressures of standardized tests and devote precious learning time to less generative curriculum-curriculum in which one's focus of inquiry is connected and related to another" (Fisher, 1995, p.23) and focus more on skill sheets and workbooks to practice for the tests. In reality, the scores that are achieved by the class, or individual, give little evidence as to whether or not a student can read successfully. "Children who read very well may select 'wrong' answers from among the limited choices available" (Perrone, 1991, p. 136).

Because standardized tests are so rooted in skills methods, basal materials and common curriculum, they do not reflect the diversity that actually exists in schools, especially those that promote whole language philosophies. Children who have learned to be cooperative learners are forbidden to talk while testing. Students who normally take their time at creative problem solving are encouraged to work quickly, choose only one answer and guess if necessary. Teachers who have spent time developing interesting, innovative lessons with their students are now forced to deliver narrow and uninteresting practice methods. Perrone (1991) argues that standardized testing is a waste of time,

lowers children's self-esteem, distorts curriculum, and lowers expectations for higher order thinking skills.

As criticism of standardized tests intensifies, demands to find alternatives to traditional assessments increase. Today, there seems to be a disruption to the traditional paradigms of assessment. Not only is new research indicating that learning is developmental and complex, influential past scientific theories have started to transform as well. The once orderly, predictable, cumulative scientific data about literacy development that was accepted unconditionally, is now emerging to create new probabilities that support language emergence theories.

Although it is doubtful that standardized testing will be eliminated from society, in order to minimize its harmful effects, it is critical that "Education must be controlled by knowledgeable professionals in the field rather than by politicians or bureaucrats or by psychometricians who know statistics and test design, but do not know children" (Weaver, 1990, p.216).

This concept of change greatly influences our educational instruction today. Now that educators are becoming conscious of student's personal construction of meaning, it encourages them to realize that teaching cannot be a direct, or exact method for each student. Learning is considered to be an accumulation of knowledge through personal experiences and surrounding environment. Teachers can now assert that progress is non-linear and can be transformable to different experiences. Knowing this information will hopefully reorganize past methods of instruction and assessment. Roger Farr (1992), states that in order to make sense of any confusion:

...we need to understand that tests have only one general purpose: Tests should be considered as nothing more than attempts to systematically gather information.

The information is used to help the learner better understand their own literacy

development and to give teachers and others concerned with student's literacy, the information they need for curriculum planning (p.28).

The primary goals of assessment are to gather information about a student's pattern of knowledge, look at the results of teaching, and make judgments, or changes, in instruction. Essential attributes of assessment include: 1) Systematic observation and documentation of data on a daily basis; 2) provision of reliable, consistent and authentic information about the progress of the child; 3) utilization of feedback to improve the instructional program; and 4) inclusion of involvement by students and parents (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

New forms of assessment for literacy can be based on authentic experiences. There are various ways of tracking progress that enable learners to self-organize and control their learning. Once students can reflect on one's strengths and needs, it is easier to be motivated to learn. A teacher can then promote instruction that relates directly to those needs, interests and backgrounds of the students (Farr, 1992). A problem that exists is that most of society is resistant to change. Most published tests have not responded to a developmental reading theory, there are, however, ways to support this theoretical understanding.

There are many forms of authentic assessment. In order to promote these assessment techniques, it is important to remember the validity of the content of a reading test in terms of the reader's purpose, interests and backgrounds (Farr, 1992). The acronym CAASR identifies the aspects of children's literacy that are recommended to be assessed:

"Concepts about literacy

Attitudes toward reading and writing

Aspects of written products and comprehension

Strategies for reading and writing

Range of reading and writing" (Sanstrom & Tonkin, 1994, p.13).

According to Farr (1992), a student's performance is based on real-life situations that are authentic. For example, reading assessment "must look at the reading act in process, or judge comprehension of a text as it is applied in some realistic way" (p. 31) that relates to a student's life.

This kind of authentic evaluation can be done through Clay's An Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement (1993a) including running records. These evaluations on the use of letter and word identification, writing vocabulary, recordings of sounds in words, concepts about print, and text reading, can be consolidated to provide information about the learning behavior patterns of individual students. The importance of running records is to observe children's reading behaviors, use of strategies, and establish a text level for each student. A book that is read at the 90-94% proficiency level provides good opportunities for both learning and observing. Any book that is read below 90% proficiency is usually too difficult to read for meaning. Those books read above 94% proficiency are easy and good for practicing strategies, however, they provide fewer opportunities for building new experiences and strategies (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Taking a running record requires the teacher to sit next to the child while he/she reads the text out loud to the teacher. Usually the text chosen is one that the child has read once before and offers some difficulty, but not enough to break down the processing or meaning of the text. The teacher watches and listens closely as the child reads, and records codes of behavior on a separate form or blank piece of paper. The teacher records all accurately read words with a checkmark. Any misread words are recorded by writing the correct intended text word under a line, and the child's misread response

written above that line. Any teacher prompts or clues given to the student are recorded below the line of the intended text (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Portfolios are another valuable and relatively new tool for student assessment. Both the student and the teacher select numerous samples of both draft and final writing assignments to be put into a work folder throughout the year. These written selections can be responses to reading selections which link students' progress to all aspects of reading, thinking and writing. "These kinds of responses encourage students to develop a variety of responses based on their interpretation of the reading selection, their background knowledge, and the direction they choose to take in constructing a realistic response" (Farr, 1992, p.32).

A successful portfolio approach is frequently discussed by the teacher, self-analyzed by the student, and shared with the parents. The portfolio ultimately belongs to the student. Students may choose to arrange them and add whatever they feel necessary for reflection. The teacher acts as a consultant to advise what type of materials will reflect the reading-writing and thinking process (Fisher, 1995). The portfolio usually contains numerous pieces of finished written work that the student has previously read to the teacher. It also holds records of each child's reading progress, such as observation, achievement of book levels, and running records. Other various pieces of work in art, math, science and social studies are also included.

Each month, the teacher pulls out the student's portfolio, has the student select two or three new pieces of work to discuss and add them to it. The student is then able to reflect on the past months work and any new progress.

Authentic portfolios can be a valuable tool used in a holistic literacy program. They provide teacher, children and parents with concrete information about current knowledge and progress. They also promote reflection, creativity and self-assessment by

both the student and the teacher. Putting this type of assessment into action can be a complex process. Controversy can erupt between individuals as well as grade level expectations of what to expect in the portfolio. Teachers, however, who collaborate with each other and their administrators, establish a system that provides information that can be used for future instructional decisions or rubrics for guidelines. School districts provide workshops to help teachers with questions, guidelines and strategies for developing authentic assessment in the classroom. Educators then begin to work with smaller groups and individual students in efforts to control their own learning and self-motivation to improve their literacy.

"Assessment begins with what children know; the evidence for what they know is in what they can do" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.73). Based upon this assumption, assessment for literacy not only applies to specific purposes related to guided reading, it "allows us to see the results of our teaching and allows us to make valid judgments about students' literacy...if assessment does not result in improved teaching, then its value in school diminishes greatly" (p.73).

Book Leveling

"For nearly two generations we have relied upon graded, sequential programs to match the difficulty of materials to children's abilities. Even then we have too often failed- we still see children struggling with material that is far too difficult for them..." (Don Holdaway, as quoted in Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.107).

An important aspect of supporting a guided reading component in the classroom is having books organized on a continuum of levels that can be matched to individual students. "Creating a text gradient means classifying books along a continuum based on

the combination of variables that support and confirm readers' strategic actions and offer the problem-solving opportunities that build the reading process" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 113).

Deciding the characteristics for creating a good selection of books takes time, experience and resources. It's important to note that books selected reflect a natural language pattern and offer enough challenge to problem solve for meaning.

There are several ways to begin constructing a text gradient for multi-leveled books, even basals can be separated and leveled numerically or alphabetically. Other teachers can participate by gathering groups of books that they have used and relied upon. By placing books in groups by difficulty, it is easier to compare a few books at time. Fountas & Pinnell (1996), offer factors to consider such as:

- "*Length.
- *Size and layout of print.
- *Vocabulary and concepts.
- *Language structure.
- *Text structure and genre.
- *Predictability and pattern of language.
- *Illustration support" (p.114).

Testing and readjusting the levels will help with the evaluation of determining the correct levels for books that support the successful acquisition of reading skills and processes.

Not all children will move through a precise sequence of books. Teachers decide what groups of books will suit a particular group of students. It is important to remember flexibility in decisions for texts. If a group's behavior towards a text is not responsive, then the teacher can readjust the decision and pull from a new selection of texts in either the same or different level.

Selecting a few benchmark books for each level enables the teacher to form reliable assumptions about whether or not a book will be at an appropriate reading level- about 90-95% accuracy, for a small group of students. A book that is read at 95-100% accuracy will not be challenging a reader, and a book that is read below 90% accuracy will become frustrating and lose meaning. Benchmarks will help teachers identify reliable texts to use for ongoing assessment (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Classroom Management

Organizing for time and activities that allow students to be able to work independently and the teacher to work in a small, uninterrupted reading group, presents a challenge to a teacher developing guided reading. While the teacher works with small groups of 5-8 children, the rest of the class is engaged in meaningful literacy, function without teacher assistance and manage their own learning. Research does not support such activities as fill in the blanks or coloring activities to be productive, so it is important for activities to be meaningful, productive and related to literacy (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996). Integrating a variety of authentic learning and enrichment activities allows for students to tap into their strengths and interests and develop personal expression while integrating other aspects of the curriculum (White & Lawrence, 1992). Harste (1990), adds that:

Invitations to read and write must be open-ended. Open-ended activities allow children to enter and exit at their own level of interest and involvement. Books and pencils should be in children's hands from the first day in school. Invitations to talk about reading and writing experiences can help children see reading and writing as tools for learning. Through exposure to literature and literature

centered activities, students experience learning in a natural manner which ultimately contributes to their overall concept of reading as a means of gaining understanding and furthering knowledge. In this way, learning becomes pleasurable and often exciting rather than a tedious task(p.318).

In order to manage classroom activities, Fountas and Pinnell (1996) give suggestions for using a work board. The work board includes:

**Names of children in groups.* These are not ability groups or even guided reading groups but heterogeneous groups of children who have the same schedule of tasks for the day. These groups stay intact for a period of time, perhaps a month, before the composition changes.

**Names and pictures (icons) of routine tasks in the classroom.* These tasks usually involve literacy, though particular teachers may have a reason go include a greater range of activities.

**Flexible ways of rotating tasks and children's names on the board that provide variety and assure all children experience a range of literacy events (p.55).*

The work board which is placed in a central location at children's eye level, can be made out of any materials such as cardboard, wood, a magnetic chalkboard, or a pocket chart. Small cards with the lists of student group names and simple picture icons for activities can be placed on magnets, or Velcro so that they can be easily moved around the work board. Each day a group can be moved to a set of new activities and at the end of the week, the picture icon activities can also be changed. The activities require very little preparation and planning. Some require no planning at all, for example, reading the room, book box, or independent reading.

During this time, children can look up, find the lists of names, and follow the order of icon activities listed for the groups. There is no signal for them to move to the

next activity because the time needed to complete certain activities varies. "While the children are working, the teacher meets with guided reading groups. A child leaves his/her assigned work task, goes to his/her guided reading lesson, and then returns to the same center he/she left" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 57). A teacher can usually meet with two to three groups each day to ensure that every child will experience a guided reading lesson at least five or six times in a two week period.

When the children complete the charted activities, they may go on to a choice of others until the teacher is finished with the groups. If the children do not finish all tasks, but have been working hard in their activities, they might have other opportunities during the week to complete those tasks. Fridays can even be used as catch-up, or choice days.

In order to be sure that children are staying on task, it is important that routines and expectations are established gradually and thoroughly in the beginning of the year. By establishing the classroom as a learning community, the teacher can encourage ways of working productively by defining clear expectations. During the first two weeks the teacher and students can read and produce a great deal of print for the children to enjoy and become familiar with. Interactive stories, charts, poetry, big books and browsing book boxes are all ways of creating routine activities early on.

Materials and centers can be introduced and demonstrated one at time so that children become familiar with and comfortable with routines before being left alone. Each activity will have guidelines and operating procedures to ensure independence and smooth transitions. Children will know what is expected of them and complete their tasks independently, giving time to the teacher to work in small groups.

By developing these self-regulating methods:

You are teaching more than literacy. You are helping children understand how to conduct themselves as members of cooperative groups. They are learning how to

fulfill commitments, manage time, manage tasks without constant reminders and supervisions, conserve materials, collaborate with others, and respect others' rights (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 65).

These skills will benefit our students throughout their entire lives.

Conclusion

"The critical factor in a child's literacy education is the support, direction, demonstration, and encouragement toward independence that he/she receives from their teachers" (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p. 189). Children want to learn to read. A goal as a teacher is to nurture that desire and create a community where students love to learn. The results of this research all recommend making reading a priority.

Children bring with them a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and competencies. By focusing on the strengths of a child and building on that foundation for further learning, teachers can provide an environment that meets the needs of individual learners.

My goal as a reading instructor is to organize my program with the goals of whole language and balanced literacy in mind. I am making efforts to facilitate my guided reading groups with quality instruction, a challenging pace, and opportunities to make connections to meaning. Continuous planning, careful evaluation and reflection will remain central to instruction.

Creating a place for guided reading in the classroom is not a process that happens quickly. Organization, resources and materials are all part of developing the program. However, "Providing appropriate texts is only the beginning. The critical element is the skillful teaching that helps young readers learn the effective strategies they need to become independent (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, p.xvi).

Eventually, through experience, the hope of reaching a comfortable framework will provide a base for instructional decisions. But like anything in life that is good- it will take time and commitment.

Goals and Limitations

The overall goals of this project are to provide some informational background for a better understanding of the component of guided reading in a balanced literacy environment. It was also designed to assist teachers in developing effective techniques for the use of guided reading in their literacy program. In order to meet these goals, I have created specific objectives of the project.

The first objective is provide teachers with question frames and specific strategies that can be demonstrated and developed during a small group guided reading session.

A good strategy user uses sets of strategies, coordinates those strategies, and shifts strategies when appropriate. If one thing does not work, good strategy users try something else...One must have an overall idea of what it means to be strategic, that is, how to adopt and combine individual strategies within an overall plan (Dole, 1993 as cited in Vogt's article, p. 3, 1997).

The second objective is to provide teacher prompts in order to help the child think, predict, sample text, confirm and self correct while reading.

The third objective is to provide a general management plan for both guided reading groups and independent workers. This also includes activities that can be used for centers and independent activities while the teacher is working with the small reading groups.

The fourth objective is to provide ideas for icons for a work board that assists in classroom management and organization of heterogeneous groups.

The fifth objective is to provide a general format for keeping records for guided reading groups. Since the diversity of groups allow for multi-level reading materials, it is important to keep track of what group is in what level book. In order to track progress

for the individual readers, a record keeper for book reading progress and observational notes for individual readers will be provided.

Although the component of guided reading in a balanced literacy classroom has been a topic of interest for the past decade, there are still some limitations of this project and suggestions for further research that could be addressed. This project is not intended to substitute any other important aspect of a balanced literacy program. It is hoped that the guided reading component will enhance a reading program and provide the individual instruction that develops independence.

One of the main limitations is the acceptance and initiation of change. Many people fear change and find it difficult to put their own beliefs into action. It takes inquiry and decision making to commit oneself to creating classroom learning environments that support students to be independent learners. Often teachers might have beliefs and knowledge in one paradigm, but use practices in another due to lack of experience, training, or confidence.

Change involves limitless time, risks and learning. In order to "continue our learning as educators, we have to interrogate our beliefs and practices and not assume we would ever have *the answer*"(Short & Burke, p.98, 1996).

Another major limitation might be a lack of resources. Many school districts do not offer leveled books. If there are none to use for guided reading, then basals can be used, but putting them into levels can be difficult and basals are generally not functional, quality literature that support the development of the reader.

Suggestions for further research might include evidence of the long term social effects on students from the use of ability groups. Evidence for attitudes of the teachers towards reading groups and guided reading is limited. Comparisons of whole group learning to guided reading groups has not yet thoroughly been addressed. Also,

comparisons within guided reading and the use of strategies such as choral reading versus independent reading could be suggested for further inquiry.

The guided reading component is one of the most valuable tools for evaluating student knowledge and progress. It is a way of providing individual attention to children by offering them strategies to build on what they know, and to provide opportunity for new learning. The ultimate goals are to help children learn how to read independently, fluently, and meaningfully.

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Appendix A:
Developing Strategic Readers

When your students come in small groups to a guided reading lesson, you can utilize the time to model effective strategic thinking, observe them attempt the techniques as they read out loud, and make necessary changes to assist students if they become confused, lose meaning, or are unable to continue reading. Because you are able to be there in a small group situation, listening in while they are reading, you can find out where they are and help them take the steps to where they need to go.

By selecting texts that provide a level of support and challenge to your students, you give each of them access to using their own background knowledge, and allow for problem solving to be done.

Introducing a book is a key element of providing the setting for reading and allowing your students to take their own background information and apply it to the text. Prompting as necessary during a reading of the text allows your students to anticipate coming events, and supports their development of reading behaviors such as matching text, self-monitoring, self-correcting, and using various cueing sources of information to gain meaning and fluency. Discussions after reading the text allow for your students to summarize in their own words what they noticed in the text. Retelling the story not only fosters your ability to check for meaning and comprehension, but it also allows a chance for your students to relate the story to their own lives and past experiences.

This section was adapted from an inservice given by Mary Ann Vogt and designed to help give prompts for introducing a story, reading through the story, and discussions for after the story. These prompts can be used in individual, small group, and whole group settings. Although it took a while to become natural at using them, they have helped me give my students chances to question, predict, problem solve and relate to stories. All of these strategies guide them one step closer to gaining meaning.

Before the Story

Predicting

"Today, we are going to read a story called _____ by _____. What do you think a story with that kind of title might be about? Why do you think so? Let's look at the cover of the book, does it give us any ideas about the story? What makes you say that? Well, this story is about _____. How many of you are familiar with this? Do any of you remember reading about something like this before?

Maybe by looking at the pictures in the book, we can get even a better idea of what's going to happen in the story. From looking at the pictures- where do you think the story takes place? Why do you think so? Also, by looking at the pictures- who do you think the story is about? What do you think the character(s) are doing in the story? What picture helps you with that?

Activating Prior Knowledge

What do you already know about _____? Does this remind you of anything else you know about? What are you curious or wondering about in this story?

Calling attention to some orthographic features

See if you can find the word _____ on this page. What do you notice about it? Do you see it repeated anywhere else in the book? What letter would you expect to see in the beginning of the word _____? See if you can find that word and point under it.

Setting the Purpose for Reading

While your reading, I want you to be thinking about _____. Remember to use the pictures to help you, and think about the story and if it makes sense as you read.

During the Story

Prompting

Read it with your finger.

Did it match what you read?

Try _____. Would that sound right?

Try _____. Would that make sense?

Can you find _____? (A known or new word)

Read that again and start the word.

Were you right?

Where's the tricky word? (after an error)

Why did you stop?

What letter would you expect to see at the beginning? at the end?

Would _____ fit there?

Could it be _____?

Check it. Does it look right and sound right to you?

You almost got that. See if you can find what is wrong.

Try that again.

Check the picture.

Does that make sense?

You said (...). Does that make sense?

What's wrong with that?

Do you know a word like that?

What can you do to help yourself?

Something wasn't quite right.

I liked the way you worked that out.

Good for you. I saw you checking the word with the picture to see if you were right.

Skip that word and see if you can go back to figure it out.

I noticed you tried _____ when you had trouble. That's what good readers do.

(adapted from Guided Reading-Good First Teaching for All Children, by Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Making Predictions

Now that we know _____, what do you think will happen next? Why do you think so?

Self-Questioning/Evaluating/Monitoring

What questions do you have about _____. What are you wondering about?

Does it make sense to you?

After the Story

Summarizing

Now try telling me what happened in the story in your own words. What were some of the important things that happened. What happened to the character? Could it be a true story? What did you think about _____. Does it remind you of anything else you've read? Did you like this story?

(adapted from Mary Ellen Vogt's "Finding a Balance in Your Reading Program", 1997).

Appendix B:
Characteristics of Leveled Books

This section focuses on examining some general characteristics of different leveled books. Regardless of what access you may have to multi-leveled books, this section was designed to give you helpful insights into the various levels, even in cases where you need to create your own levels for books. Because literacy development is fostered when we offer a balance of challenge and support, your students can become independent problem solvers. It is helpful to observe your student's behaviors within each level. These behaviors might be good indicators of strengths and needs. By monitoring these behaviors through observation in a small group setting, we can use interventions strategies in our instruction to guide them in their reading.

Level A and B

These easy levels are used to introduce children to reading words in a book. These books focus on a single story line and relate directly to the pictures. The language used occurs in natural syntactic structures and often repeats throughout the text. Because the print is clear and well spaced, teachers use these books to teach word to word matching of finger to text and locating familiar words. Most books have one or two sentences per page with a full range of punctuation.

Important behaviors to observe:

- *Book handling-noting front and back of the book and turning pages from right to left.
- *Controlling left to right movement and returning sweep while looking at text.
- *Noticing detail in pictures.
- *Using oral language in relation to the text.
- *Pointing directly to the text matching word to word.
- *Locating familiar or new words.

- *Remembering language patterns.
- *Predicting what makes sense.
- *Self monitoring-checking one's reading by noticing mismatches in meaning or language.

Level C

These books also have simple, familiar story lines; they have two to five lines of text per page. At this level, most of the story line is carried by the text, but pictures are still significant. Frequently used words are often repeated, however, there is more variation in language pattern. Even though the sentences are a little longer, the syntax is still simple.

Important behaviors to observe:

- *Using visual information to help predict, check and confirm.
- *Control of word-by-word matching of voice with print.
- *Using illustrations as well as text to predict meaning.
- *Checking illustrations with print.
- *Reading through the text with meaning.
- *Solving some unfamiliar words.
- *Accumulating and recognizing vocabulary from book to book.

Level D

These stories are slightly more complex, but still easy to relate to and understand. Pictures still support the print, but more attention to meaning of the text is required. There are usually more words than Level C, and words that have been used in previous texts are used many times. The vocabulary contains more inflectional endings so that children are able to notice the variations in word structure.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Control of word-by-word matching for longer stretches of text.
- *Moving away from finger pointing as eyes begin to take over the process.
- *Checking on one's own reading using knowledge of letter-sound relationships, words, and parts of words.
- *Rereading to confirm reading or problem solving.
- *Moving more fluently through the text.
- *Actively reading for meaning.

Level E

Most stories at this level have three to eight lines of text per page, and text placement varies. The ideas in stories require more interpretation of meaning and the pictures offer support, but may suggest several ideas. Some of the concepts may be less familiar to children. Problem solving is needed to figure out new words, and reading more of the vocabulary words requires skill in word analysis. Texts may look simple, but control of print is required to read for meaning.

- *Tracking print with eyes except for points of difficulty.
- *Use of knowledge of language syntax and meaning to read with phrasing.
- *Reading fluently.
- *Solving new words through use of meaning.
- *Rereading and cross-checking ones source of information with another to confirm search, and self-correct.
- *Predicting what will happen and reading to confirm.
- *Using prior word knowledge to read new words.
- *Relating one text to another.
- *Using more information from print to construct meaning.

Level F

These texts are slightly longer than the previous level and the print is somewhat smaller. Literary language is mixed with typical oral language structures, but the syntax of the text still reflects written language. Story lines include more events which follow one another chronologically and characters are usually more developed. Generally this level has a distinct beginning, middle and end. Dialogue is presented in a variety of ways and punctuation supports meaning.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Being aware of punctuation and using it for meaning.
- *Using visual information to figure out new words.
- *Using syntax of written language to predict and then checking predictions.
- *Analyzing new words to see if they make sense.
- *Reading fluently for meaning.
- *Using known words and parts of words to get new words in context of meaning.
- *Using multiple sources of information to self-correct.

Level G and H

These levels contain more challenging ideas of concepts and vocabulary that extend beyond the child's experiences. The reading vocabulary continues to expand as new vocabulary is introduced. Stories have more events and occasional but less repetition in story structure.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Integrating pictures and print to check and search for meaning.
- *Solving new words by using word analysis, then rechecking word for sense and meaning.
- *Monitoring and self-correcting errors.

- *Discussing ideas from the story to indicate understanding.

- *Discussing characters to indicate understanding.

- *Connecting text to other previously read texts.

Level I

At this level there are a variety of texts, including some informational ones. Story structure is more complex, elaborate and sophisticated. Illustrations provide low to moderate support. Readers are asked to relate to different points of view and discuss new ideas and compare to other stories. There is evidence of unusual and challenging vocabulary and these texts include a large number of words familiar to children. Problem solving will be needed for unfamiliar words.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Fluent, phrased reading.

- *Competent problem solving of new words.

- *Checking reading for meaning.

- *Making connections between text through discussion, art or writing.

- *Demonstration of an understanding of characters.

- *Self-correcting without having to return to the beginning of the sentence.

- *Gaining momentum and fluency by using knowledge about how text is used and what is most likely to say.

Level J

Level J represents advanced first and beginning of second grade reading levels. There are a variety of text genres such as nonfiction, folktales, realistic stories, and more that deal with familiar themes. Stories are more complex, however, they still provide stories that are of interest to children. Some of the books are long chapter books that have shorter sentences so that students can move through them rapidly, others are shorter

books that involve harder text. Many of the texts have literary language that children have become familiar with, but offer new styles of character development.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Using skills and strategies effectively on a variety of texts.
- *Sustaining fluency through longer text.
- *Easily coming back to the text if it requires more than one sitting to finish.
- *Solving unfamiliar words or concepts without losing meaning.
- *Development of more internal self-correcting behaviors to support meaning.
- *Reading silently most of the time.
- *Demonstrating understanding of story through discussion, art and writing.
- *Using ideas from stories in one's own writing.
- *Summarizing or extending a given text.

Level K

This level also includes a variety of texts. Some books contain long stretches of easy text that strengthen the child's ability to read for longer periods of time. Although illustrations might not be on every page, they support, extend and enhance the interpretation of the story. Some of the stories are familiar tales that have only been read aloud in Kindergarten or First Grade, now to be read independently. Usually the stories have multiple episodes that relate to one single plot. Much of the reading is now done silently.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *The use of multiple sources of information in an integrated way.
- *Efficiently analyzing longer words.
- *Using a variety of word strategies and problem solving without losing meaning.
- *Reading for long stretches of text.

- *Demonstrating an understanding of stories from different perspectives and ability to empathize with characters.
- *Using text structure to predict a likely sequence of events and analyze the text.
- *Sustaining characters and plot over a period of several days.

Level L

This level marks a large shift in reading materials. Many of the books are now longer chapter books with little pictures to support the meaning. There are more characters, sophisticated language structures, details and descriptions. Stories are more involved, with challenging vocabulary and smaller text size. Reading the text requires several days of reading independently and group discussions of character and plot development.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Longer stretches of text.
- *Complexity of vocabulary, ideas and topics.
- *Greater range of language genre.

Level M

All of these text have smaller print, spacing and complex language structures. Vocabulary is sophisticated and stories present more abstract concepts and themes. Background knowledge is used to help understand the expanded plots and complex character development.

Important behaviors to notice:

- *Same as behaviors listed for K and L
- *Children can search for and find information within a text.
- *The ability to interpret texts from a variety of perspectives.
- *Can read critically.

*Can reflect on own personal response in relation to how others see the text.

*Can reflect on character development

Levels, N, O, P, Q and R

These titles at each of these levels are beginning attempts to identify third and early fourth grade texts and are not necessary for this project.

Adapted from Guided Reading-Good First Teaching for All Children by Gay Su Pinnell & Irene Fountas, 1996.

Appendix C:
Samples of Leveled Books

Most schools have access to leveled reading books that enable you to take running records with to find out what developmental level each of your students are reading at. I have access to some of The Wright Group books and have chosen some books from levels A-I to use as "benchmark" books to look at the strategies my students are using, identify their strengths and needs and determine their approximate reading level. The books I use to take running records are books that the students have not seen before, and I use the same questions and prompts for before, during, and after the story for each child. After repetition and familiarity with the stories, these, or your own, prompts will become second nature to use and you'll no longer need to rely on remembering the structured guideline questions. If you need more ideas or background on taking and scoring running records, Marie Clay's An Observation Survey, is an excellent source of information.

Level A _____

Title of Book: Huggles Can Juggle by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if they know how to juggle.
- *Introduce readers to a "Huggles".
- *Ask students what word Huggles rhymes with.
- *Today we're going to read a story about Huggles who can Juggle-the title of our story is "Huggles can Juggle".
- *Ask students: "What kinds of things do you think he can juggle by looking at the cover?"
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what he will juggle-tell me what you see" (go through pages of book and discuss).

During the story

- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Point out the word "an", discuss it's significance in regards to using "a".
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Occasionally stop and allow students to predict what might happen next.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.
- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level B _____

Title of Book: To School by Jilliean Cutting

Before the story

- *Ask students how they get to school.
- *Ask readers to find the word "school" on the cover.
- *Tell students that the children on the front of the book are going to tell us how they are getting to school.
- *Ask students: "How do you think some of the students will get to school by looking at the cover?"
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what kinds of ways they will get to school-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).

During the story

- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Point out the word ending "ing", discuss it's significance.
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Occasionally stop and allow students to predict what might happen next.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.
- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level C _____

Title of Book: Uncle Buncle's House by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if any of them have an uncle. Have students describe their uncles.
- *Introduce readers to book- Uncle Buncle's House.
- *Ask students if their uncle's house looks like the one on the cover. Ask, "What type of house is Uncle Buncle's house?"
- *Ask students: "What kinds of things do you think there are in Uncle Buncle's house?"
- *Ask students what word "uncle" rhymes with. Have them point to the word "uncle" on the cover.

*"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see what kinds of things there are in his house-tell me what you see" (go through pages of book and discuss).

*Teacher might want to introduce some of the unusual book language and have children repeat some of the structures (phases or sentences) that might be awkward to read.

During the story

*On first page ask, "What are there in Uncle Buncle's house on this page?"

*If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.

*Point out the numbers displayed at the top of each page, discuss their significance in regards to the numbers written in the text.

*Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.

*Occasionally stop and allow students to predict what there might be next.

After the story

*Have student retell the story in their own words.

*Ask students if they have any questions about the story.

*Check to see if predictions were right.

*Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level D

Title of Book: "Scat!" Said the Cat by Joy Cowley

Before the story

*Introduce readers to the story -"Scat!" Said the Cat.

*Ask students what word "scat" means and what it rhymes with.

- *Ask students if they know what the quotation marks are for around the word "scat". What word helps them to know someone is talking.
- *Have students point to the word "said".
- *Have students point to both the word and the picture of the cat on the cover.
- *Ask students to look at cover and announce what other animals might be in the story.
- *Ask students: "What kinds of words rhyme with some of the animals?"
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what animals will be in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).
- *Introduce any unusual book language and have students repeat some of the structures that might be awkward to read.

During the story

- *Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.
- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Occasionally stop and allow students to predict what might happen next.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.
- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level E

Title of Book: I'm Bigger than You! by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if they've ever wanted to be bigger than someone else.
- *Introduce readers to the story -"I'm Bigger than You!"
- *Ask students to look at cover and predict who they think wants to be bigger in the story.
- *Have students point to the word "bigger". Ask if it would make sense to say, "biggest".
- *Ask students to tell you another way of saying "I'm" (I am). Discuss apostrophe.
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what is going to happen in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).

During the story

- *Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.
- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Stop before the end and allow students to predict what might happen.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.
- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Ask if they can find where the word changed from "bigger" to "biggest".

*Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level F _____

Title of Book: Bread by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if they've ever been sent on an errand for their mother.
- *Ask students to predict what the word on the cover might say.
- *Introduce readers to the story - "Bread".
- *Ask students to look at cover and predict what they think the mother might need from the store.
- *Ask students to predict who the man on the cover might be.
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what is going to happen in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).

During the story

- *Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.
- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Some children might need to be explained what a "twin" is.
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Stop before the end and allow students to predict what might happen.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.

- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Ask if they noticed a pattern in the story. Have them repeat the pattern.
- *Ask students if they noticed the animal pictures located under the text. Ask what they were there for.
- *Ask students if they felt the twins had done something wrong.
- *Ask how the mom felt when she saw the bread.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level G _____

Title of Book: Old Grizzly by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if they had ever been grumpy.
- *Ask students to predict what the word on the cover might say.
- *Introduce readers to the story - "Old Grizzly".
- *Ask students if they know what a "grizzly" is.
- *Ask students to look at cover and predict why they think the grizzly bear is old.
- *Ask students to predict if the bear is a happy bear or a grumpy one.
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what is going to happen in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).
- *Before looking at the last picture, ask students to predict where everyone is going.
- *Have students go through some of the words and read any that they might know.

During the story

- *Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.
- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Tell students the story is a rhyming story and that the words that sound the same might help them figure out more difficult words.
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Stop before the end and allow students to predict what might happen.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.
- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Ask if they noticed a pattern in the story. Have them repeat the pattern.
- *Ask students to describe how the bears feelings had changed.
- *Ask students if the dogs were bear's friends.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level H _____

Title of Book: The Tiny Woman's Coat by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students to predict what the word on the cover might say.
- *Introduce readers to the story - "The Tiny Woman's Coat".
- *Ask students to look at the cover and predict why the woman is called tiny.
- *Ask students to look at cover and predict what time of the year it might be.
- *Ask students to predict what it is that the tiny woman wants.

*"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what is going to happen in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).

*Before looking at the last picture, ask students to predict what happens in the end.

*Have students go through pages and point out any words that they might know.

During the story

*Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.

*If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.

*Tell students the story is a rhyming story and that the words that sound the same might help them figure out more difficult words.

*Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.

*Stop before the end and allow students to predict what might happen.

After the story

*Have student retell the story in their own words.

*Ask students if they have any questions about the story.

*Check to see if predictions were right.

*Ask if they noticed a pattern in the story. Have them repeat the pattern.

*Ask students to describe how the woman's feelings had changed.

*Ask students if the animals were the woman's true friends.

*Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Level I _____

Title of Book: Just This Once by Joy Cowley

Before the story

- *Ask students if they have a pet.
- *Ask students if they've wanted to take their pets with them any place.
- *Ask students what they do when they want to have something really bad.
- *Ask students to predict what the word on the cover might say.
- *Introduce readers to the story - "Just This Once".
- *Ask students to look at the cover and predict what kind of pet the girl has.
- *Ask students to predict where the girl wants to take her pet hippopotamus.
- *"Let's look at some of the pictures in the story to see if we can see what is going to happen in the story-tell me what you see"(go through pages of book and discuss).
- *Have students go through pages and point out any words that they might know.

During the story

- *Point out the quotation marks and remind students to remember the significance.
- *If sentence structure is unfamiliar to the child, teacher might start the book by reading the first sentence.
- *Students might need help with the word "howled".
- *Have students read through text using prompts to help them gain meaning.
- *Stop before the end and ask what they think the parents are going to say.

After the story

- *Have student retell the story in their own words.
- *Ask students if they have any questions about the story.

- *Check to see if predictions were right.
- *Ask if they noticed a pattern in the story. Have them repeat the pattern.
- *Ask students to describe how the parents felt when the girl and the hippo howled.
- *Ask students if the little girl did the right thing to get her way.
- *Go back and have students point out some familiar and unfamiliar words in the story.

Appendix D:

Classroom Management

In order to allow for enough time to work with at least two or three groups each day in small guided reading groups, as well as allow enough time for completing center activities, I usually schedule a time block for about 60 minutes each day. While your groups are participating in guided reading lessons, all other students are engaged in meaningful literacy events without assistance from the teacher.

Setting up for center activities can be frustrating at first. Trying to come up with ideas, as well as constantly changing materials for the activities, can discourage the use of student run centers. Don't worry, it's taken me about three years to finally figure out what is comfortable for my own program as well as what meets the students interests. There is no set time spent in each centers. Children who have had training in clear guidelines can be trusted with working independently and upon completion of their assigned centers, students can be given a choice of activities to go to. These activities require little or no planning. The set up can be changed once a week, and sometimes even kept as a permanent center.

All center and choice activities are clearly displayed using icon pictures on a work board in the front of the room, with the lists of children at the top of board that will be assigned to the particular groups for those centers. The work board guides the children through a series of tasks. Each day a group is assigned to four center activities. They can stay in each center for as long as they need. If they finish their centers, they can look up to the board for choice activities that are displayed below the assigned ones. These can be any of the other center ideas you haven't used that week, or something they might choose to do themselves.

Some of these ideas, have been adapted from Pinnell and Fountas (1996), others have been my own creations and extensions.

***Book box:** This is a box that contains several books children have successfully and previously read in their guided reading groups. In addition, other easy books that the teacher feels confident that the children can read successfully and independently are also placed in the box. Children can take the box of these books to a reading area and read and reread to gain fluency of these familiar texts.

***Words:** In this center, the teacher can place a number of activities that deal with making words. For example, children might construct words from magnet letters, yarn, glitter, playdough, beans, stamps, magnadoodles or any other choice of materials. Here they experiment with word strategy games, word endings and similarities of print.

***Listening Center:** The listening center contains a variety of stories on tape. It contains a recorder, headphone sets and cassettes with matching texts put together in a large zip-lock baggy for storage. Children can play a tape and follow along in the copy of the book. The start and stop buttons are color coded for easy use. After listening to a story, extension activities such as drawing the characters, or illustrating their favorite part, or comparing the story to similar ones they have read can be done.

***Art Center:** The art center provides materials for a variety of activities including painting, drawing, collage, clay etc. Often the activities relate to the stories read in class for the week or the themes being studied.

***Writing Center:** This defined space provides a variety of writing materials that allow the students to write in their journal, create rough drafts for stories and poems, write letters, lists of things, directions, articles for newspaper, or whatever they choose to create. Items such as paper, pencils, construction paper, blank books, scissors, tape, staples, date stamps, dictionaries, alphabet sound charts and high frequency word lists, can be displayed in this center.

***Read around the Room:** Pointers made out of rulers, popsicle sticks or dowel rods can be used for children to go around and read all of the print displayed on the walls of the room. Every rich literacy classroom has a large variety of print for children to read. Things like alphabet charts, pocket chart sentences, poetry, class produced stories, etc. all are enjoyable to read for this activity.

***Library:** This is a time for children to go into the class library and just enjoy reading books. To eliminate those "quick" visits to the library, usually a rule is set for students to look at a minimum of three to five books while they are in the library. As children become more proficient readers, teachers can require them to keep a list of books they've read independently.

***Big Books:** In this center, children can enjoy reading from the big books that have been used in shared reading activities, or ones they have made themselves. Usually the big books are kept in one location for children to easily look through.

***The Poem Box:** This is a box that contains poems that have been typed up, and sometimes illustrated, from poetry charts that the children have learned to read, or have been read to throughout the year. Poems can also be presented on cards mounted on stiff tag board, in poetry books, or books that have been cut apart and used for individual laminated pages.

***Computer:** If computers are available in the classroom, they can be used for word processing, book publishing, illustrating, creating story stacks in Hyperstudio, sending electronic mail, and playing games that require the use of language and literacy.

***Buddy Reading:** Buddy reading with a partner is one of the favorite activities for young children. This activity can be done in several ways. Partners can each have a copy of the same book and read it to each other one at a time, in unison, or switch back and forth on alternate pages. Or, partners who each have a different book can take turns

reading the whole book while the other partner listens and looks at the pictures. Many teachers have been successful in teaching children to listen and help without jumping in too soon.

***Games:** There are many word and alphabet games available through publishers, as well as homemade ones that give children opportunities to play with letters and words. This is usually one of the favorite centers.

***Pocket Chart:** Children can either read stories and poems from the pocket chart using pointers, or they can recreate their own favorite stories or retellings of stories with a pile of sentence strips in a basket placed by the pocket chart. Children also love to put their own names into the stories.

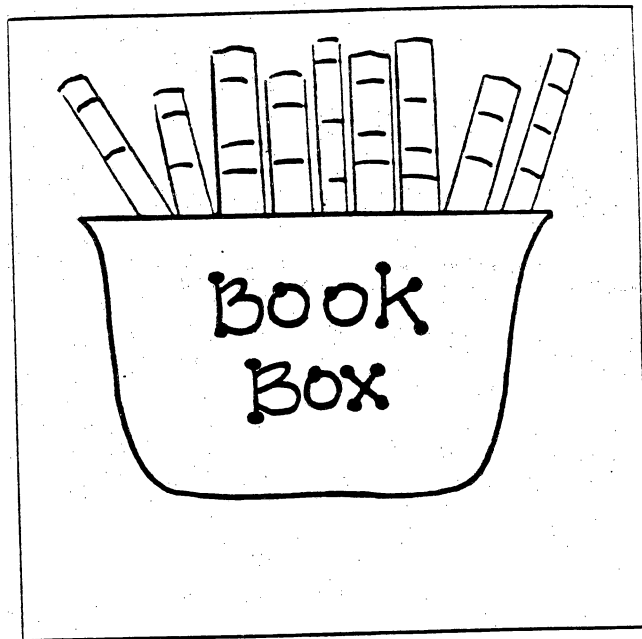
***Overhead Projector:** If an overhead projector is available in the classroom, the teacher can reproduce poems, songs, and short stories onto plastic transparencies for children to project onto the screen and read. One child can point to the words on the transparency or the screen while others read. Another useful tool is to cut up plastic letters that can be moved around on the overhead to make words.

Appendix E:

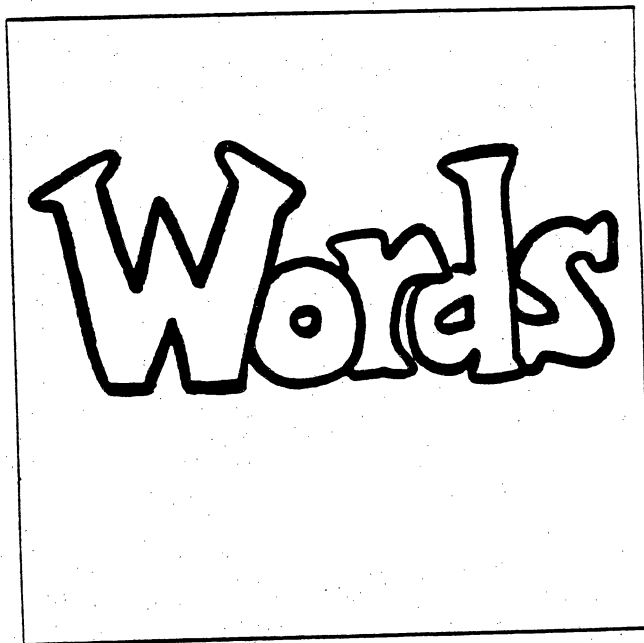
Work Board Icons

These are some picture icons I've designed for my work board activities. I have mine colored, cut out, laminated, and they have magnets on the back of them for mobility on the chalkboard. Feel free to use them, or have fun and design your own.

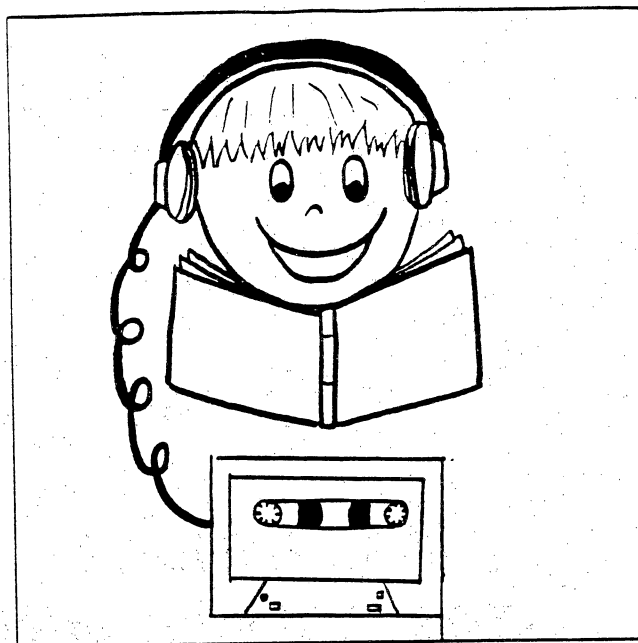
Book Box



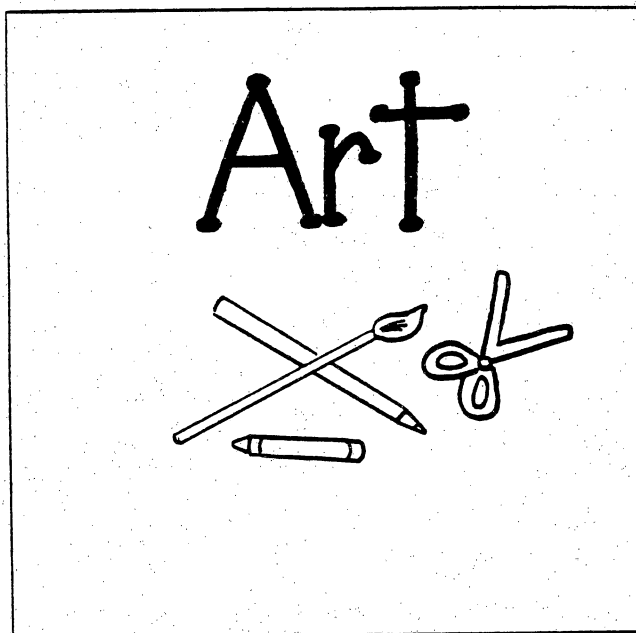
Words



Listening Center

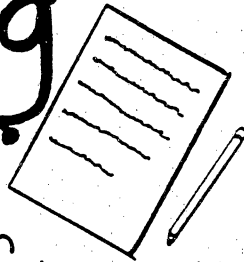


Art Center



Writing Center

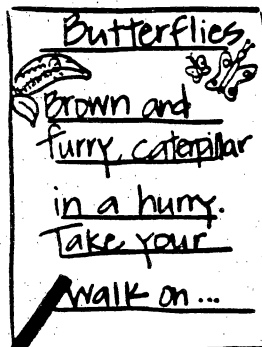
Writing Center



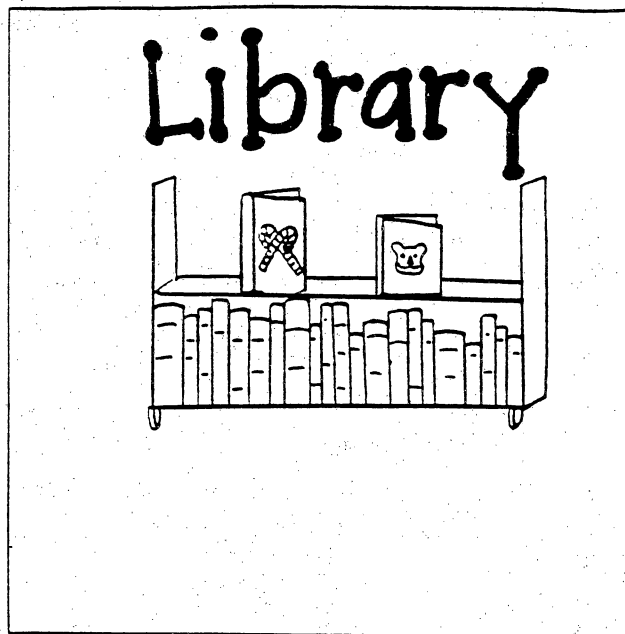
- 1) Brainstorm
- 2) Write a first draft
- 3) Revise
- 4) Proofread & edit
- 5) Publish

Read around the Room

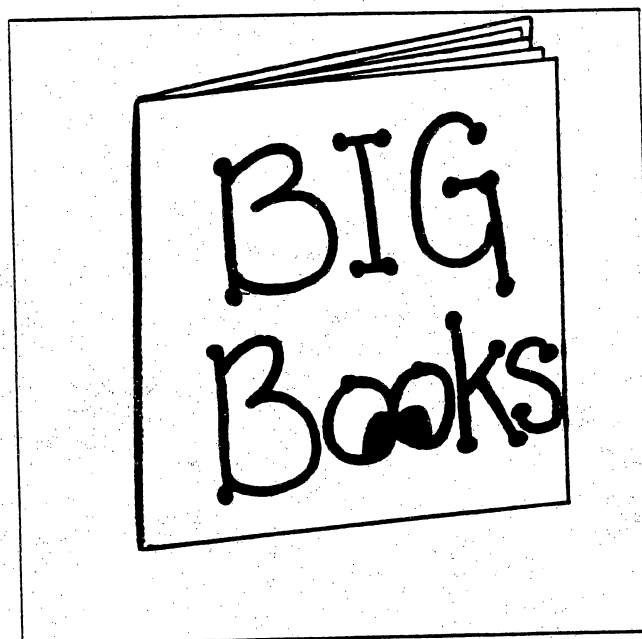
Read the Room



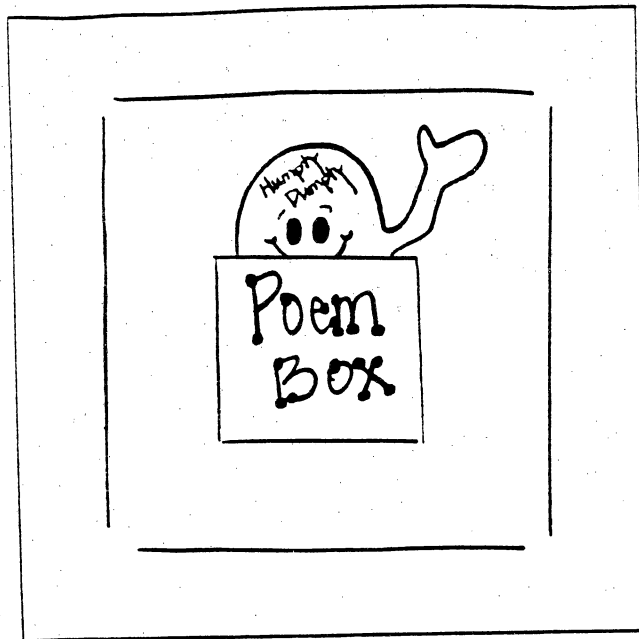
Library



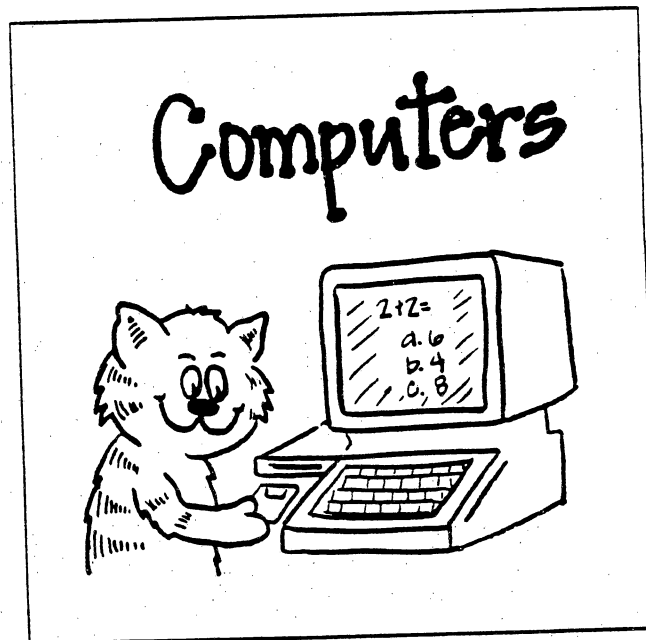
Big Books



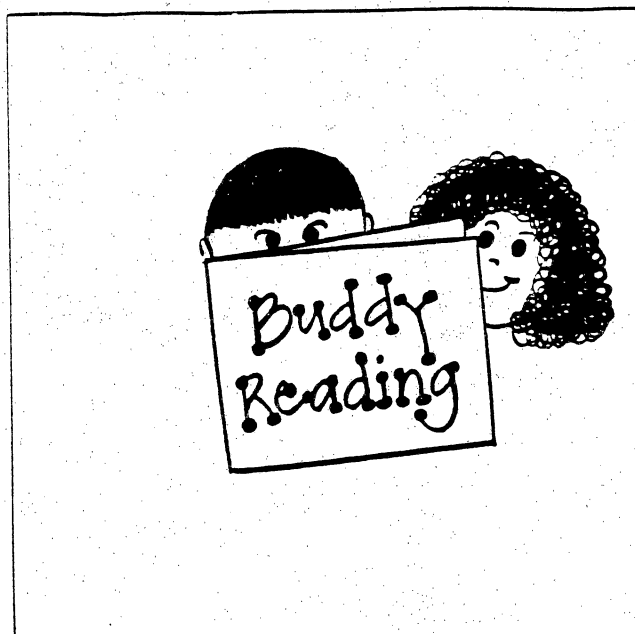
The Poem Box



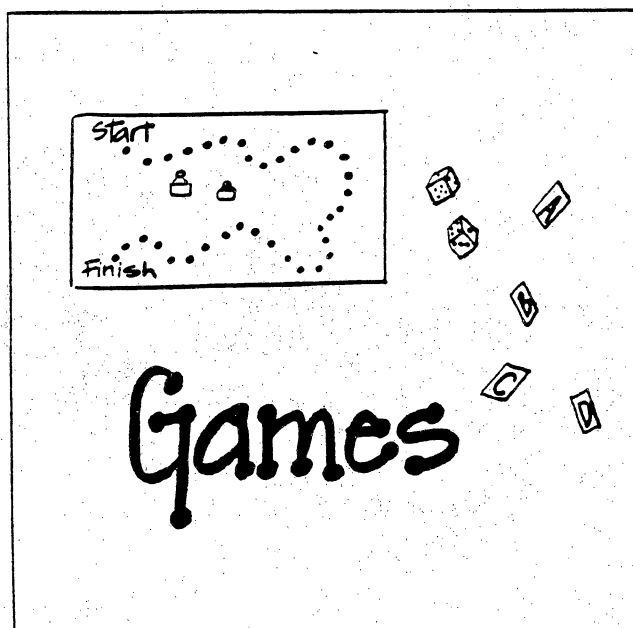
Computer



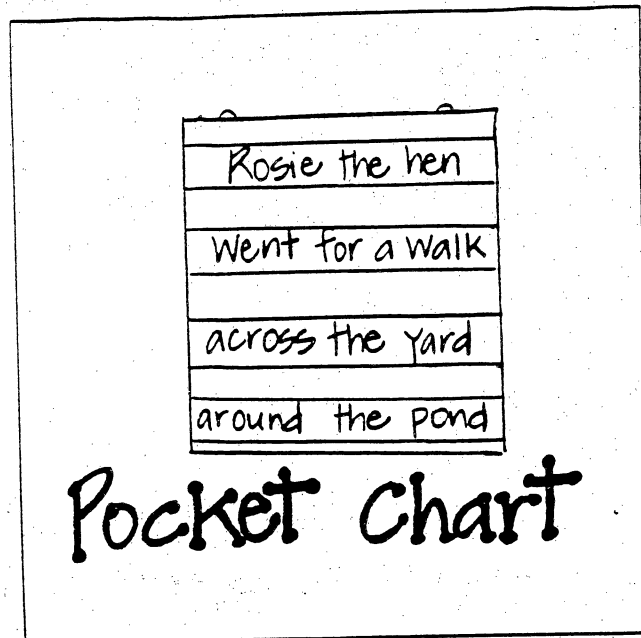
Buddy Reading



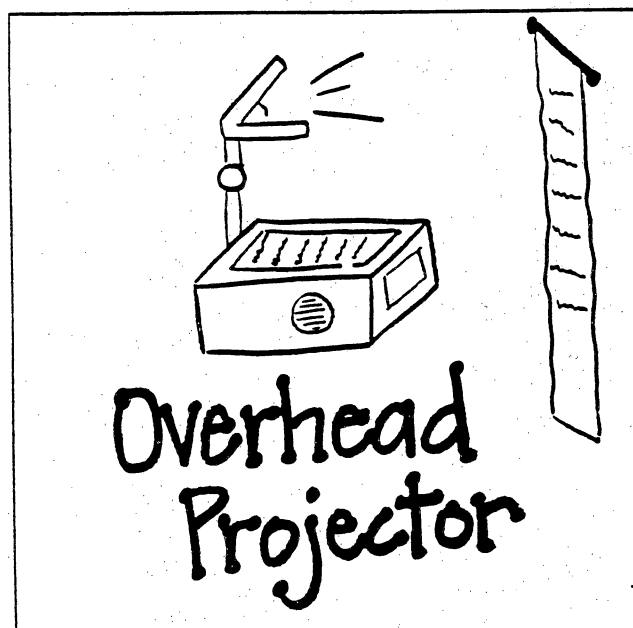
Games



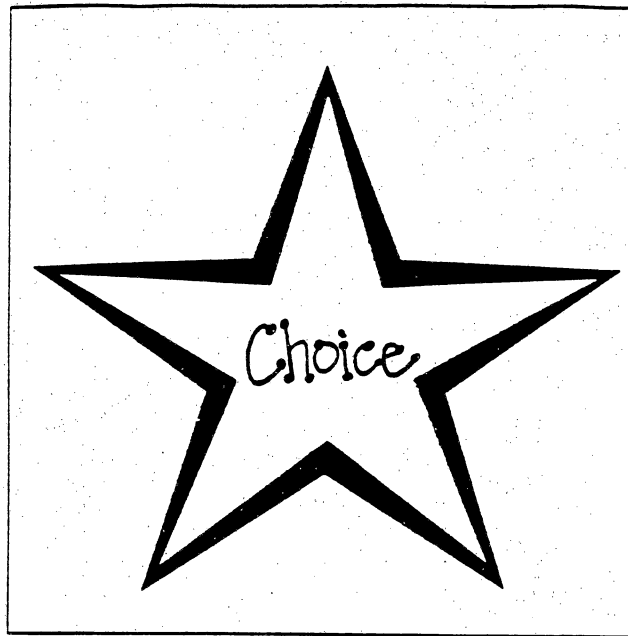
Pocket Chart



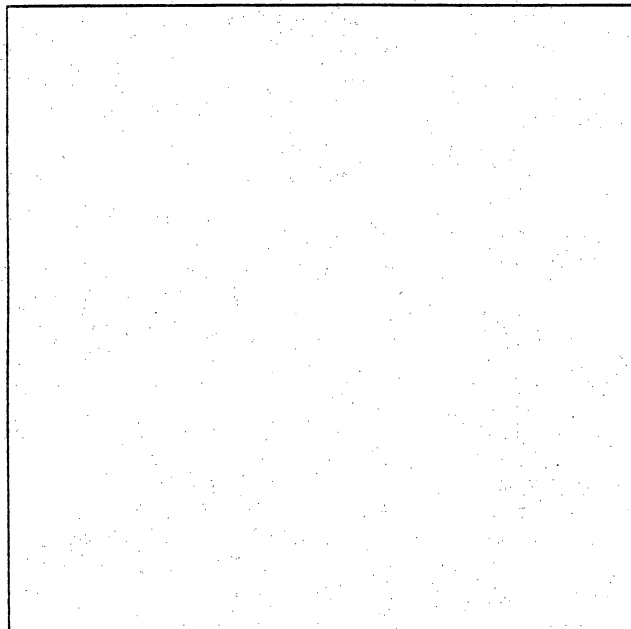
Overhead Projector



Choice



Create your own



Appendix F:
Management of Guided Reading Groups

Establishing routines early in the year can make center activities and working with guided reading groups easier to manage. Children can also learn to help each other work through completing their group tasks. Although guided reading groups are based on homogeneous levels of reading development, center work groups are heterogeneous-mixed with both advanced and low readers. This rotation schedule was designed to give an overview for planning independent work centers for a ten day period. Each day, a list for guided reading groups to be seen by the teacher, is written under the column for "Guided Reading Groups", and the heterogeneous work groups are written at the top for each column in the "Independent Work Groups" section. The rest of the squares are used to fill in with the center activities that they are assigned to daily. I have provided a sample form for the ideas behind this rotation schedule, as well as a blank form that can be enlarged for the use of planning your own two week schedule.

Management of Guided Reading Ten-Day Plan					
Week #1	Guided Reading Groups	blue	red	green	yellow
Monday	Jorge's group Kacie's group	Book Box Words Listening Center	Pocket chart Overhead Book Box	Poem Box Buddy Reading Games	Big Books Library Computer
Tuesday	Dawn's group Chuck's group	Art Writing Read the Room	Book Box Words Listening Center	Pocket chart Overhead Book Box	Poem Box Buddy Reading Games
Wednesday	Jorge's group Kacie's group	Big Books Library Computer	Art Writing Read the Room	Book Box Words Listening Center	Pocket chart Overhead Book Box
Thursday	Dawn's group Chuck's group	Poem Box Buddy Reading Games	Big Books Library Computer	Art Writing Read the Room	Book Box Words Listening Center
Friday	Jorge's group Kacie's group	Pocket chart Overhead Proj. Book Box	Poem Box Buddy Reading Games	Big Books Library Computer	Art Writing Read the Room
Notes:					
Week #2	Guided Reading Groups	blue	red	green	yellow
Monday	Dawn's group Chuck's group	Book Box Listening Center Words	Book Box Overhead Proj. Pocket chart	Games Buddy Reading Poem Box	Computer Library Big Books
Tuesday	Jorge's group Kacie's group	Read the Room Writing Art	Book Box Listening Center Words	Book Box Overhead Proj. Pocket chart	Games Buddy Reading Poem Box
Wednesday	Dawn's group Chuck's group	Computer Library Big Books	Read the Room Writing Art	Book Box Listening Center Words	Book Box Overhead Proj. Pocket chart
Thursday	Jorge's group Kacie's group	Games Buddy Reading Poem Box	Computer Library Big Books	Read the Room Writing Art	Book Box Listening Center Words
Friday	Dawn's group Chuck's group	Book Box Overhead Proj. Pocket chart	Games Buddy Reading Poem Box	Computer Library Big Books	Read the Room Writing Art
Notes:					

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Management of Guided Reading Ten-Day Plan					
Week #1	Guided Reading Groups	Independent Work Groups			
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Notes:					
Week #2	Guided Reading Groups				
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Notes:					

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Appendix G:
Keeping Records for
Guided Reading Groups

Guided Reading Records

Checklists are helpful for observing, recording, and organizing specific behaviors of your students. The first type of checklist form enables you to take a quick look to make sure you are observing each child regularly. The second checklist form allows for continuous observational notes on each child.

Guided Reading Record

Version One

[illegible]

Guided Reading Record

Version Two

[illegible]

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Record of Book Reading Progress

Record of Book-Reading Progress														
Child's Name: _____										Grade(s): ____ K ____ 1 ____ 2 ____ 3				
Title of Book, Accuracy Rate, SC Rate (o = above 90% * = below 90%)														
Book Level														
P														
O														
N														
M														
L														
K														
J														
I														
H														
G														
F														
E														
D														
C														
B														
A														
Date:														

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